

CHAPTER NO. 762

HOUSE BILL NO. 2883

By Representatives Sherry Jones, Sontany, Mike Turner, Cobb, Coleman, Pruitt, Langster, Odom, Fowlkes, DuBois, Hargrove, Shaw, Pleasant

Substituted for: Senate Bill No. 2885

By Senators Dixon, Burks

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 65, to enact the "Calling for 2-1-1 Act".

WHEREAS, the Federal Communications Commission has assigned 2-1-1 as the national telephone number for telephone service for information and referral on human services; and

WHEREAS, the number "2-1-1" is an easy-to-remember telephone number that facilitates critical connections between individuals and families seeking services, volunteer opportunities, or both and appropriate human service agencies, including community-based and faith-based organizations and government agencies; and

WHEREAS, individuals and families often find it difficult to navigate through a complex and ever growing maze of human service agencies and programs, spending inordinate amounts of time trying to identify an agency or program that provides a service that may be immediately or urgently required and often abandoning the search from frustration or a lack of quality information; and

WHEREAS, many families need information on government and not-for-profit services that address domestic violence, support adequate and stable housing, alleviate hunger, and provide for high-quality day care, afterschool activities, summer activities, job training and assistance, elder care, and disaster recovery; and

WHEREAS, individuals often need support, services, or both when suffering emotional distress, having suicidal thoughts or behavior, contemplating violence, or using drugs or alcohol; and

WHEREAS, the 107th Congress recognized the importance of 2-1-1 telephone service in community preparedness and response by including use of that telephone number for public information as an allowable use of funds under grants for preparedness and response to bioterrorism and other public health emergencies under § 319C-1 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. 247d-3a), as added by § 131 of the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-188); and

WHEREAS, while twenty percent of the population has access to 2-1-1 telephone service in 21 states, inadequate funding prevents access to that telephone service throughout each of the states; and

WHEREAS, under the proposed federal program a state seeking a grant must act only through a lead entity which shall be treated as the 2-1-1 Collaborative for a state; and

WHEREAS, a 2-1-1 Collaborative must be created either under state law, be appointed by order of the state public utility commission, or be established by the state from among a variety of community-based, faith-based or not-for-profit organizations, and other foundations and businesses; and

WHEREAS, it is the sense of this general assembly that the most efficient and expedient method of designating a 2-1-1 Collaborative would be for the Tennessee Regulatory Authority to make such a designation; now, therefore,

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. The title of this act is and may be cited as the "Calling for 2-1-1 Act".

SECTION 2. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 65-4-117, is amended by designating the existing language as subsection (a) and by adding the following language as a new subsection (b):

(b) Not later than December 31, 2004, the authority shall designate an entity to be the 2-1-1 Collaborate for the state of Tennessee, such 2-1-1 Collaborative being designated in order to be qualified to obtain federal grants relating to 2-1-1 service in Tennessee. The authority may designate an entity to be the 2-1-1 Collaborative based on either the petition of an entity seeking such designation, or based on the authority's own motion.

SECTION 3. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 65-4-301(a), is amended by designating the existing language as subdivision (1) and by adding the following language to be designated as subdivision (2):

(2) Fees collected by the authority pursuant to this part shall be expended by the authority for the inspection, control and supervision of the business service and rates of such public utilities as established in subdivision (a)(1) above. In addition, the Tennessee Regulatory Authority may grant, on a one-time basis, an amount not to exceed four hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000) from the public utilities account, as defined in Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 65-4-307, to the 2-1-1 Collaborative for the purpose of defraying start-up costs associated with the establishment of 2-1-1 telephone service to cover all parts of the state of Tennessee. Such grant may be made only after public notice is provided by the Tennessee Regulatory Authority, specifically giving all public utilities, which are currently doing business in this state and subject to the control and jurisdiction of the authority, the opportunity to raise objection to such grant. The authority shall consider any objection timely filed in response to the authority notice prior to making such grant.

SECTION 4. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.

PASSED: May 12, 2004

APPROVED this 24th day of May 2004


JIMMY NAIFEH, SPEAKER
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES


JOHN S. WILDER
SPEAKER OF THE SENATE


PHIL BREDESEEN, GOVERNOR